

#4

An  
Inaugural Dissertation  
On  
Lunar Influence  
Submitted to the examination of the

- the  
Trustees and Medical Professors,  
of the  
University of Pennsylvania,  
on the day of April, 1808.  
for

The Degree of Doctor of Medicine.

By John H. Davis  
of Chester County Pennsylvania  
Honorary Member of the Philadelphia Medical  
Society.

Widderich D. Mungard

minister, and

the following are to be recommended

Widderich, Widderich, and

Widderich, of Mungard

and the following

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An  
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In all scientific pursuits, we should be extremely cautious how we admit those things which partake of the Marvellous; and in no subject whatever should we be more exacted against this than in Medicine. "The science of Medicine is very an excellent writer ought to be kept as free of Miracles as possible." No superstitious theories as regards the cause and nature of diseases - no foreposterior remedies suggested by the whimsical old woman, or, perhaps, still more fanciful physician, should ever gain admittance into this Divine Art." Indeed, when I reflect on the subject, the new and improved effect, which Medicine has assumed within a century past, seems to be, more owing to a spirit of skepticism which has arisen and an ardor for removing the absurd and opinions of preceding writers, unfeathered by the beams of groundless prejudices, than to the many new discoveries which have been made. By ridding it of the immense mass of rubbish by which it was unfortunately surrounded for so many ages, it appears in quite a new form, and shines with its proper lustre.

That veil of obscurity which so long shrouded this



Blessed vision from the eyes of the common people and  
confined its important truths to the temples and  
the priests, is at length happily removed. Yet, I repeat  
it, this <sup>Divine</sup> Magnum <sup>Dei</sup> Domum, as formerly considered  
by the vulgar, those encyclopedic authors, which were so  
long locked up in the hallowed grave, have stepped from  
their sacred cells and readily unfolded their mysteries  
at the first demand of the most moderate curiosity.  
The abolition of that monstrous practice of pub-  
lishing medical works in a language unintelligible  
and obsolete contributes not a little also to our facility  
of acquiring a knowledge of this useful art. The ex-  
cellent principles which have lately been establish-  
ed and proven to be correct by experience preclude  
the possibility of its enemies ever in future <sup>to</sup> stop and  
closing it with the unmerciful spirits of uncertainty  
and fallacious and as in a game of hazard  
every thing doubtful. That it may still be said to be  
in a measure uncertain and fallacious this we  
would by no means pretend to deny: in fact unfor-  
tunately for the human race it is too true not to  
be admitted: but may not the same thing be said



of every thing else. Who would renounce the science of  
navigation and abondon all the advantages resulting  
from a commercial intercourse with the  
different nations of the earth, because navigators  
have sometimes been deceived by irregular varia-  
tions of the needle; why, then, would one the science  
of Medicine in accuse it of uncertainty in an  
unlimited sense because we are not always able  
to determine the extent of a disease or invariably  
foretell the effects which will result from the remedies  
we employ. But while I am thus enlarging on  
the contemptuous state of Medical knowledge the fol-  
lowing question seems whispered in my ear: How  
physicians then completely free themselves from  
every thing like preopinion in favor of every  
opinion and are such things alone admitted as  
truths as are proven to be so from correct observa-  
tion and experience? happy would I be were I able  
to answer this question in the affirmative; but  
truth forbids it. Alas! we live in the 18<sup>th</sup> cen-  
tury prejudices superstitions prejudices I fear  
will prevail among us. I shall not in this im-  
proper place task upon me the task of pointing  
them out whenever I suppose them to exist.

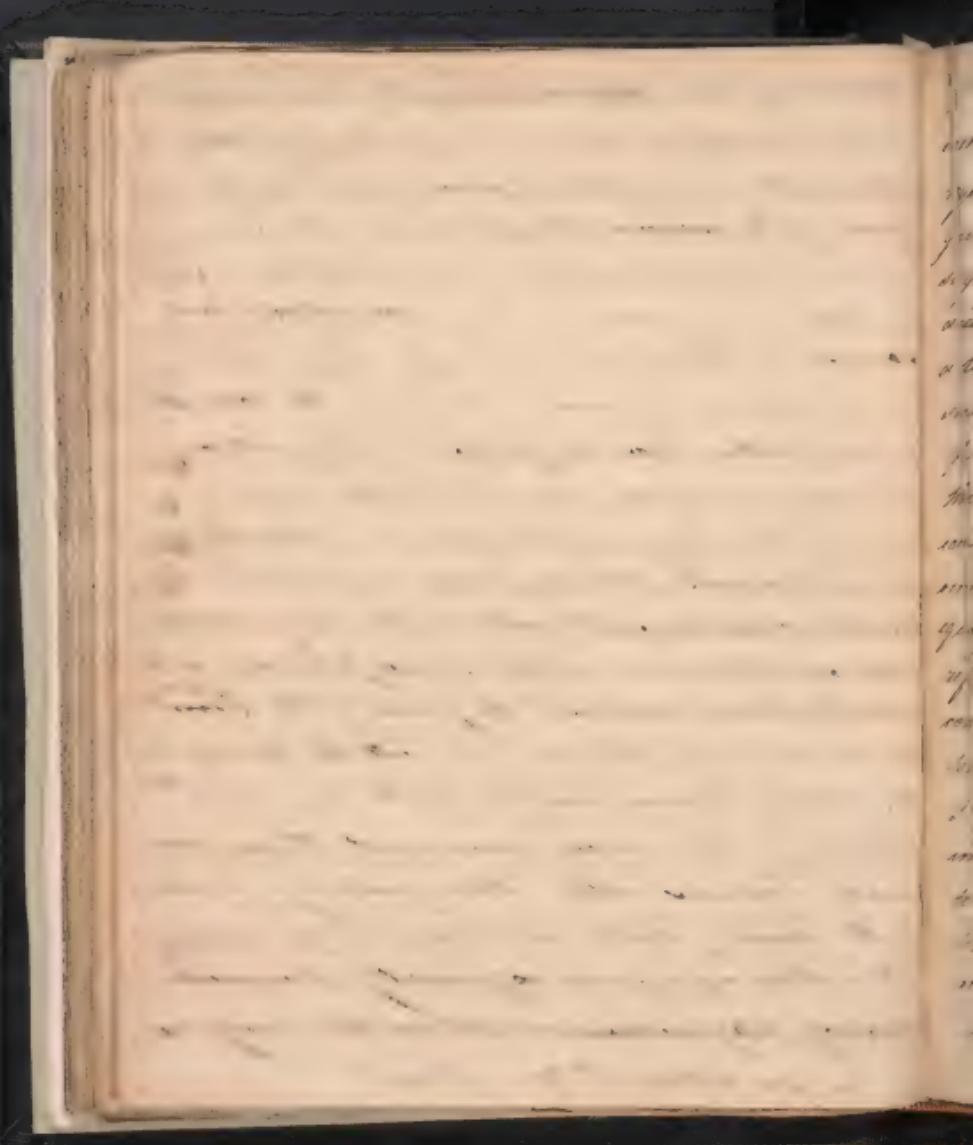


This at any time would be laborious and unprofitable  
I shall however mention a few which ought to be  
admitted by all who seriously reflect on the sub-  
ject. The first I shall take notice of is the belief  
in the contagious nature of bilious epidemics  
and the efficacy of Quarantine establishments  
in preventing their propagation from country  
to country. As the ingenious and justly admired  
professor Rush very aptly observes in his Lectures  
The practice of mailing horse-shoes over a the  
door of a dwelling house in order to avert the power  
of witches is not more truly ridiculous than  
those expensive monuments of human folly  
erected in our ports. The very name indicates  
from what source this baneful practice origi-  
nated. To point out clearly that there is a practical  
error in the very principle upon which they are  
founded would be no Herculean undertaking.  
but it has been abecondly done; I should suppose  
to the satisfaction of every man of sense.  
How strictly too do the physicians of the present  
day adhere to the old Hippocratic doctrine of in-  
tinal days which has no better foundation and

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... influence of the moon on the flocks in Africa:—  
"It's principal opinion his father had was  
committed to his distant son, concerning the  
fluence of the moon on the flocks in Africa:

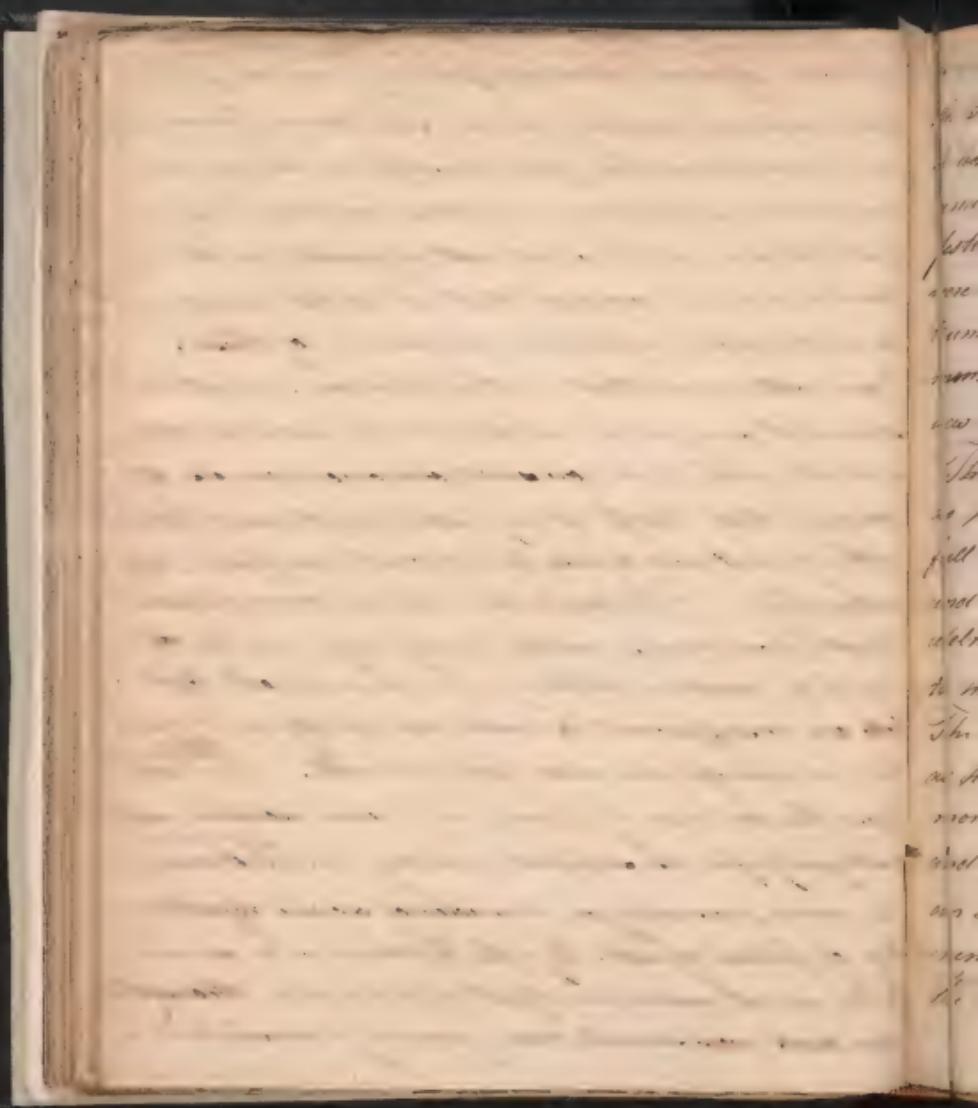
"And Jacob took him rods of iron poplars, and  
the boughs and branches thereof; and spilt them  
strakes, in shorn, and made the white ex-  
terior rind of them to be in the rods. And he set the rods which  
he had spilt before the flocks in the gutters,  
the watering-boughs, when the flocks came to  
drink; that they should conceive when they  
came to drink. And the flocks conceived before  
the rods, and brought forth rattle-ring-strained  
and speckled and spotted. And Jacob did so  
with the lambs, and set the pieces of the boughs  
round the rump-strakes, and all the brown in  
the flock of Leabeen: and he sent his own  
flocks by themselves, and sent them no  
into Leabeen's cattle." There probably is no  
- the source of that mistaken belief and  
it within a few years so generally prevailed  
among physiicans as well as the vulgar.—



your feet! I am not in a condition to go on with anatomy and physiology, as with the divine  
reverence of the by thy God these would never  
give an argument from Holy Writ in scripture,  
so great an error which impresses on the minds  
of a beloved offsprings the image of a not  
a bad or a tooth entwines them with sufficient  
such clothes this little框架 with a  
of various hues or sometimes to invisible! send  
them into the world with unperfected limbs, fore-  
and bones or destitute of a heart. Many others are  
made equally ridiculous with those mentioned as  
equally resulting from negligence and want of  
attention might be pointed out but as I did not  
contemplate doing it from the beginning I shall  
not myself with mentioning and other  
I intend shall be the subject of my particular  
introduction in the remaining sheets. I allude  
to the influence of the moon upon the human  
and terrestrial bodies in general which  
view is not so generally received among us  
but the moon does exert some and a powerful



in your manuscript of mine, which you will find in your  
first and last publisher; which will divide from us  
ever and evermore from himself to us no one  
ever pretended to deny and this would be a proof  
of skepticism which shall not originate with me.  
I only mean to contend that it exerts no one  
no insipidable influence exclusive of these.  
I am well aware that in this opinion I shall be  
somewhat singular and much more so than  
I would wish to be on such an occasion, as the  
present; but truth is my sole object and for  
nothing will ever be able to prevent me from pur-  
suing her. The doctrine I have ~~now~~ oppose  
I well know wants neither antiquity nor the  
weight of modern authority for its support but  
both are insufficient to create an entity out of  
nothing or change an error into a truth. As I said  
to you the doctrine of Jesus is ~~not~~ an error, not  
antiquity for its support among the Hebrews  
is now, ~~now~~ always considered as an object of  
prime regard. By the Hebrews she seems  
to be much more an object of reverence than  
Jesus and was much more generally worshipped.



a bit, to a man and a woman. The sound of trumpets and instruments and voices were all given to the actions of men in these feasts, and they were usually spent in the greatest festivity and mirth. The feasts of new moon were a miniature representation of the four trumpets, which was held on the first of the month Tisri (corresponding to our Sept.) was the commencement of the civil year.

The Greeks seem to have considered the new moon as particularly favorable to marriages; and full moon, or the times of conjunction of the earth and moon, were held the most lucky seasons for celebrating them, because they imagined the moon to have great influence over generation.

The Spartans always looked upon the full moon as particularly favorable for any undertaking, more especially for those which related to war, and no motives would induce them to enter on an expedition, march an army or attack an enemy till the full of the Moon.

The moon was especially by the Greeks and Roman

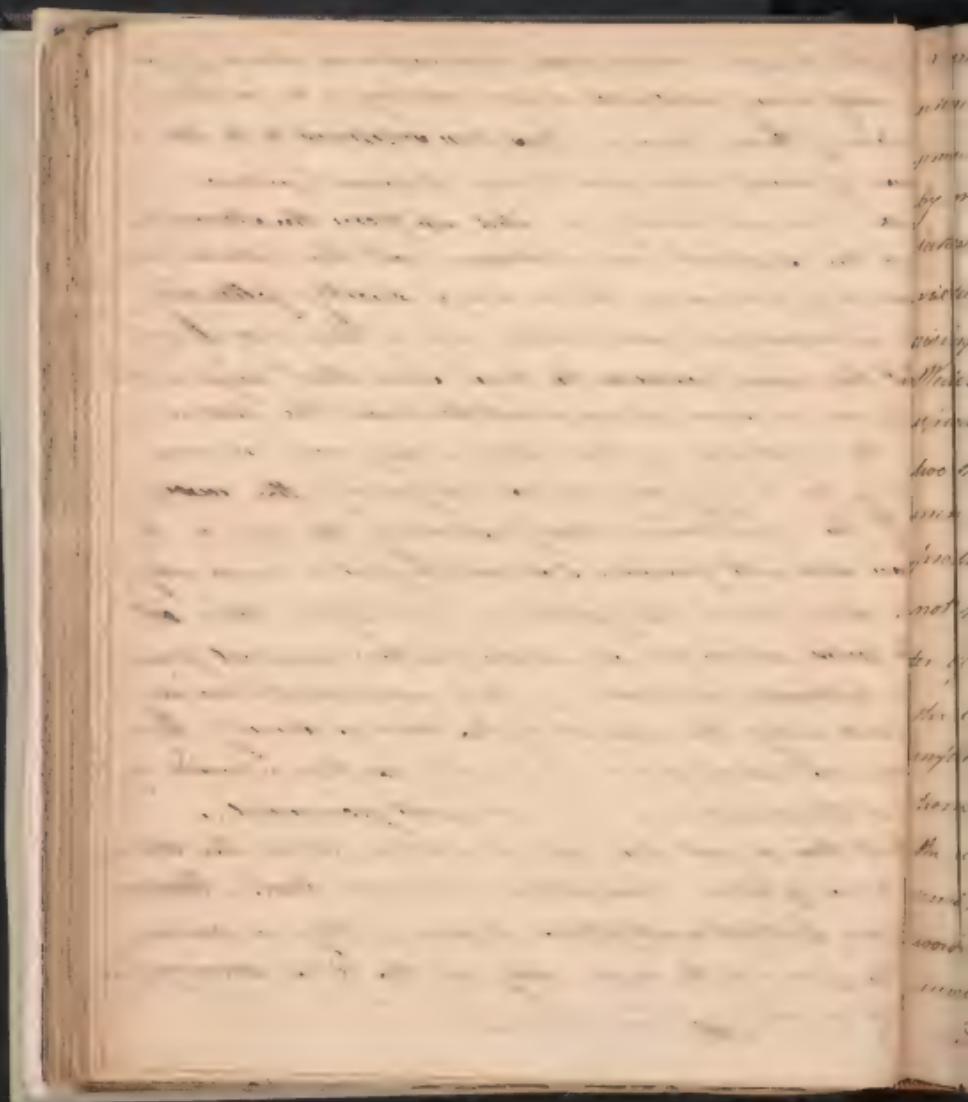
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to preside over child birth more she comes as often  
of invoked during times of labor under the name  
of Sorceress, for all ages too! the power of the  
moon over the weather has been considered to be considerable  
But the writers who treat of the syries of the moon  
do not take from the moon, derive their force, no  
less from circumstances which meet the eye  
any real influence of the moon over disease, nor  
affords any foundation for such a belief, but the  
monthly indications of the state of the air at the  
time of observation; such are the shade of the day,  
the degree and color of the light, and the accident  
and quality of the luminous bodies which are  
surround her. Perhaps I should confine my  
self more particularly to its effects, or, more properly  
by speaking, supposed effects on the human body,  
but the bodies of the ancients have been so greatly dis-  
figured as a manifest proof of the moon and  
all luminous things that I fear I shall be allow-  
ed to bring you within a few arguments  
as calculated to show that even their theory is  
entirely ungrounded in reason and fact. It is  
indeed to be regretted that men are so apt to an-

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Events in our connoisseurship circumstances which, in  
any may be only ministered or have nothing to do in the  
duration of them. There has been supposed to be the  
cause of what have been termed Bilious Epidemics  
since it is universally so, that up from the stormy  
and the excellent and wholesome root the potsherds  
caused of producing the sickness shortly following  
its introduction into Europe nor is there any, save  
that the moon produces the tides save that high, &  
appears in some places about the time the moon is  
in the meridiem of that place I say only in some  
places for it is by no means uniformly the case.

If the Newtonian theory respecting the tides of the  
ocean were well founded I should be glad to know why  
the tides under the equator are not higher than at  
the poles which are so much further removed from  
the pretended circumference of that noble and luminous  
planet, & why the current of the tides is derived to  
the poles instead of from the equator as they should be  
were the opinion of Sir Isaac well grounded.  
That this is not the case is proven from the ob-  
servations of Ellic, Simon, Baudot, Cook, Mader  
Byron, Barter and others. Agreeing if they be true  
to the power of the moon why are the tides during  
& in community with a disturbance from that it was advanced by  
in the time of ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> solar & tidal.



Summer is much higher than this is in the high  
when the moon passes this over into the southern, the  
sun which is also proven by the accounts given  
by many navigators.\* Why then these no tides in  
tides the circumference of lake superior is sev  
several hundred miles and yet there is no percept  
rising or falling of the water. Why too none in the  
Mediterranean, Caspian and Baltic seas the per  
ipheries of these thousand miles in length and no  
two thousand five hundred in breadth yet the mo  
tion when in the zenith of this vast body of wa  
ter there is no appearance of a tide. Moreover why is  
not the barometer affected equal to a column of wa  
ter of 10. 20. 30. 50 or an hundred feet in height  
the barometer if any is at any time very little  
affected. Who I might offer many other objec  
tions to the commonly received opinion respecting  
the cause of tides, I shall omit doing it in this  
and defer the reader to the excellent and ingenious  
work of De Saint Pierre which should be in every  
instruct library and perused at least once a year a  
writer Cook.

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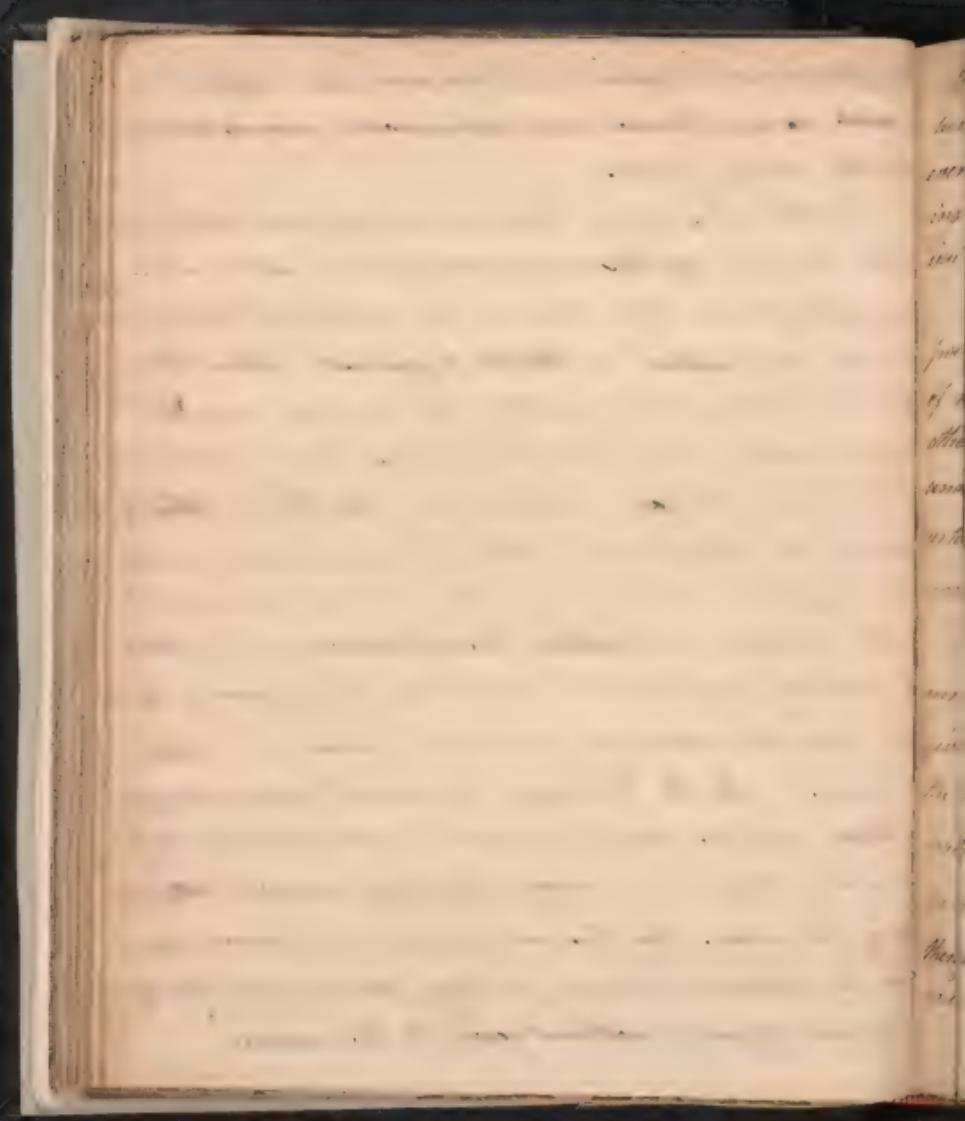
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well for our own improvements in scientific subjects  
to teach us our humble and dependent condition  
and the mercy of God.

If then this strong hold be removed from the  
of the upholders of this enormous doctrine what a no-  
tice of proof can they have of its influence on  
human body either in health or disease. And  
Lions and others have written particularly on this  
subject and all their proofs by facts to be met.

in Darwin Monthly, London L. & Co to Dr. Max  
Fawcett the following is spoken of the doctrine  
most positive: it is in one possible opinion in  
with creation and neither has a tendency to prove  
the certainty of which he intended by showing we  
have been the attempts of an omniscient and bene-  
-ficial. As to Epilepsy hereditary humor hæmorrhage  
of blood, maniac relapses of over menstruations and  
epilepsy. They are occurring every day and not all the  
days of the moon. This has not been known if he have ever  
seen an epileptic, in fact, Epilepsy occurs every day  
in our days L. & Co without regard to the moon.



and services, a power in every, but may be  
less in the day and as equally independent of, as  
even the women themselves, who are no fond of as-  
sing effects to this body, never attribute their per-  
petual flux to this cause.

At what numerous and different periods  
journies, relapses into a state of derangement  
of them, must unavoidably happen, on human power  
otherwise I should at once renounce my opinion  
and adopt the doctrine of human influence. I  
certainly believe the moon possessed of the power  
overlaid or preventing their attack not certain, for

But when we consider the subject how much  
our opponents take but how little chance do they  
give us of disproving their theory. They contend  
the moon exerts her influence at the vertiges and  
times, and for three days before and three days  
after of these vertiges. There are twenty four of  
therefore in each synodic month over, which at the  
rest is sufficient to provide; and as the whole con-

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best of twenty nine days twelve hours and three quarters, only five and a half days are accounted from his pretended dominion. Hence though disease as should have no connection with the different positions of the moon and tho' they be distributed in an equal proportion through the whole synodical month yet any one who shall predict that an attack or release or any change will happen on a day one of the twenty four days assigned, neither then in any of the remaining five and a half will always have the chances twenty four to five and a half in his favor.

But I perceive the various errors which I have assigned to my dissertation will not allow me to dwell longer on the subject of it I shall therefore put a conclusion to my imperfect essay as to its imperfections no person can be more conscious of them than myself. In the eyes of no one will these sheets appear contemptible than my own. Perhaps had not bodily indisposition prevented I might

Spoken without any & considerate & kind  
and to & reduce it in size & to an all  
over system you to introduce a kind ~~suppl~~  
and now it was made in most vigorous &  
true on the way it is ~~you~~ will with the  
more in the beginning not be satisfied &  
again, however, introduce here the ~~you~~ &

have considered it, more worthy the medical school  
of which it is a production. Before concluding I  
must beg the several professors of the university to  
accept (as all I have to offer, my sincerest my most  
grateful thanks for the instruction I have received  
from them in their professional capacities.  
Not being personally acquainted <sup>to</sup> with any one  
of them (save the benevolent social and hospitable  
Burton) I am indebted but for few acts of private  
friendship, personal. O kind and benevolent Providence  
whose a misfortune can befall us in our  
best times through life from which we do not recollect  
more to less advantage. Had this not been the case  
perhaps I should at present have labored under more  
my obligations which I never could have freed myself from... Adieu! Prosperity attend all your  
laudable efforts.. . . . .

Finis.

J.

Amur.